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Bullies in the pulpit

Among the government agencies Congress has decided to destroy is one of its own -- a moderate sized agency that provided technological information and assessment to the members and their committees. The amount of money to be saved is minimal, minuscule in fact when weighed against the value of Congress knowing enough to judge the wisdom of proposed defense, space, health and scientific programs.

Congress is, of course, doing many and even more drastic, inhumane and foolhardy things these days, but the firing of its own technological advisors symbolizes as well as anything its indifference to reality. Congress, given a choice, is voting to be dumb.

I am told that one member of Congress went so far as to ask, "What do we need a Weather Bureau for? We've got television, don't we?" It may be apocryphal but who knows any more? What does seem clear is that seldom has so much hubris been driven by so much ignorance. It has also been clear for some time that the lesson books of politics and journalism no longer help that much in describing what is going on; we are not in the midst not only of a political event but of a pathological one as well. The Gingrich generation is not only anti-social welfare, it is anti-social.

The GOP members don't just hate deficits, they have contempt for anything or anyone conflicting with their own puerile ambitions. They do not seek to legislate so much as they seek to manipulate and control. And in the end, they are not really politicians at all, but political bullies.

The Gingrich generation is not unlike the bullying children described in a recent *Psychology Today* article. In it, psychology professor Dan Olweus lists the elements of bullying:

- repeated aggressive behavior
- negative intent
- a power difference between the bullies and the bullied.

Author Hara Estroff Marano notes that bullies tend to perpetually attribute hostile intentions to others thus, for example, misinterpreting an accident as a call to arms that ultimately justifies revenge.

Continues Marano:

> [Bullies] have a strong need to dominate, and derive satisfaction from injuring others. Bullies lack what psychologist call pro-social behavior - they do not know how to relate to others. No pro-social attitudes hold them in check; they do not understand the feelings of others and thus come to deny others' suffering.
>
> Bullies are also untroubled by anxiety, an emotion disabling in its extreme form but in milder form the root of human restraint. What may be most surprising is that bullies see themselves quite positively -- which may be because they are so little aware of what other truly think of them. Indeed, a blindness to the feelings of others permeates their behavior, style and outlook.

To be sure, the bullying style so characteristic of the 104th Congress did not begin in politics nor is it by any means confined to it. In many ways what is happening today is a continuation of what happened to many corporations in the 1980s. Financial and legal bullies moved in with the confidence and cruelty of Mafiosi, selling off and laying off with abandon. Pretty soon even college students were saying, "I want it all." The corporate, legal and yuppie lifestyle increasingly became marked by arrogance, anti-social behavior, inability to cooperate and an obsession for power. In short, the archetype of the 1980s was a bully. In the 1990s this archetype remains with us, only the barbarians have moved from the gates of Wall Street to the halls of Congress and the target is no longer a weak corporation but a whole country.

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And who is willing to take on these bullies? Not the president with his aura of easy victimization making him a repeated target of political torment. Not the liberals who have turned terminally catatonic. Not the strangely silent academia or the churches from which we hear barely a mumblin' word. And certainly not the press. Because much of the media reflexively toadies to power, and because even the devil would seem a reasonable sort on the *Larry King Show*, the personal cruelty and anti-social behavior of the GOP bullies has attracted little notice and censure.

Worse, journalists have increasingly found advantage in emulating the bullies, witness the racially cutting remarks about the Simpson jury that were de rigueur for white commentators after the verdict. Or the *Atlantic Monthly*, where writer-bullies have recently called for physically removing the poor from low income urban neighborhoods and adding five million more cops to keep black America under control -- ideas that not even Gingrich himself has been brazen enough to propose. Or ABC News' John Stossel reporting for 20/20 that Alabama chain gangs were "reasonable punishment" and "only fair." When a prisoner argued that "you're not allowed chain an animal up in Montgomery," Stossel said, "Animals don't break the law." Even Hugh Downs said, "I can't see the cruelty." And that's the problem. The media, like much of America, has stopped being able to see the cruelty.

America's last period of political bullying was during the time of Joe McCarthy. Then as now, the liberals, the press, and the educators refused to confront the bullies and in the end it took a member of the legal establishment and a conservative senator to say, "Enough." To remind everyone of the obvious: that this is not what America is about.

Eventually, bullies do not do all that well. But sometimes, as when the denouement comes before an international war crimes tribunal, the amount of pain created along the way can be enormous. And sadly, like children watching a fight in the playground, most people simply are too indifferent or too afraid to do anything about it.

It's Gingrich's ace in the hole: the probability that no one will say, "Enough." In the end, Gingrich and his cadre can only prevail as long as their anti-social behavior is regarded as acceptable and normal and not, as it really is, beyond the pale of a decent human community.. -- *Sam Smith*

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Restorative justice

David Spero

Communities get hit three times in our criminal justice system. First by the impact of crime, then by having large numbers of their young people locked up, and finally by having to pay the mushrooming costs of incarceration. "The bullheaded approach to criminal justice is pushing local governments to the financial breaking point," says Paul Cohen of the National Association of Counties. Some cities and counties have been forced to the edge of bankruptcy by the costs of building and operating jails, attempting to cope with the tide of prisoners washed in by the War on Drugs and draconian sentencing laws.

Other communities, though, are regaining control of the haywire justice system. They're involving citizens at every level of prosecution, sentencing and correction. And from rural townships to the biggest cities, they are healing victims, saving youth and reducing costs with a variety of sentencing programs involving restitution, mediation, community service, intense supervision and reintegration of offenders.

One leader is Western New York's Genesee County, midway between Rochester and Buffalo. Genesee is gorgeous in autumn when the maples and elms turn color. People come from all over to visit Letchworth State Park, the "Grand Canyon of the East." But there's something else in Genesee just as extraordinary: an uncrowded jail.

In this rural county (largest city: Batavia, pop. 15,000), nearly the whole community has gotten involved in what they call "restorative justice." Crimes still happen, but victims are more likely to be compensated and criminals more likely to be reintegrated into the community. Genesee also saves a whole lot of money.

"In 1980-81, our jail was full," says Community Service/Victim Assistance coordinator Dennis Wittman. "We were faced with building a big expensive new one. But a new sheriff convinced us to try community-based sentencing instead." They started with community service sentences. Wittman and others recruited non-profit, schools, churches and road crews to assign hard work to convicted offenders in lieu of jail time. The community agencies generally liked the help; for the criminals, it was often their first positive contact with anyone in authority.

Next came victim assistance. Only a token afterthought in most jurisdictions, intensive victim support is central to Genesee justice. 90 volunteers work with victims, helping them get professional help, prepare "victim impact statements" for the court, and obtain restitution from offenders. In 1985, Wittman and associates developed a full-scale felony diversion program that slows down the judicial process so offenders can get their lives together under strict supervision.

First, they're screened. "They have to be motivated and remorseful," says Wittman. "If they are, they meet regularly with a community sponsor, maybe a teacher, a pastor, even a dentist. They work intensively on their behavioral problems, drugs, alcohol or whatever, while the case is put on hold for 8 - 12 months." If things work out, the offender can be sentenced to community service and restitution, with or without jail time. The recidivism rate is only 5%.

With enough community involvement, felony diversion has worked even in violent cases. A few years ago, an 18 year old sniper on LSD seriously wounded two passers-by in Batavia. He went through diversion for 18 months, including victim-offender conciliation. This conciliation helps victims heal and force offenders to confront the pain they have caused. The young sniper finally received a short jail sentence plus community service and now works, pays taxes and raises a family in Genesee County.

It takes a lot of community involvement to make community-based sentencing work. Genesee has nearly 200 volunteer sponsors and victim advocates, and 107 community agencies placing and supervising offenders. The program is worth the trouble by any measure, especially economically. Every year of jail time eliminated saves $15 - 25,000 dollars. And Genesee made $600,000 last year renting surplus jail space to more punitive jurisdictions.

Urban communities can also get themselves involved in sentencing. In LA's Centinela Valley, between LAX and South-Central, hundreds of youth have been kept from prison and a life of crime through a victim-offender mediation program. Director Steve Goldsmith is a former union organizer from Louisville.

"First we get the victim to agree to mediation," he says, "then the young offenders and their parents. We hold the sessions at a place convenient to the victim, with two volunteer mediators who have gone through 40 hours of free training. The mediators let the victim and offender work out the solution. The important thing is the kids have to hear the consequences of their actions on others." Usually, resolution includes some kind of apology and restitution. The owner of a burglarized car may collect for damages to windows and dashboard, for example. When low-income youth can't pay, parents may front the money with the kids contracting to pay

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People interested in starting victim-offender mediation or jail diversion programs can contact:

- Centinela Juvenile Offender Diversion Program, 1 Manchester Boulevard. Inglewood, CA 90301
- Genesee County Community Service and Victim Assistance County Bldg. #1, Main & Court Sts., Batavia, NY 14020

Those interested in community courts can contact:

- National Institute of Justice Washington DC 20531.

them back through work, or Goldsmith may contact a local business to get them a temp job. Either way, the offender is likely to feel better about himself, but "the victims are the big gainers," according to Goldsmith. "They may have felt they were singled out or stalked, when actually the youth was just bored. Talking with the person who hurt them or damaged their property can really take a load off their mind."

🕮

Some cities have begun bringing the community right into the courtroom. In the heart of Manhattan, the Midtown Community Court includes social workers, activists and business owners in creating community sentences for nonviolent offenders, and matching them with needed services.

Sponsored by the nonprofit Fund for the City of New York, the Midtown Court heard its first case in October 1993. Most cases involve drug sales, prostitution, vandalism and petty theft. Community leaders identify and supervise service projects, such as maintaining sidewalk tree beds, painting out graffiti, or helping non-profits with bulk mailings. A social worker assesses the defendants' physical and psychological condition and whether they have problems with substance abuse, mental illness or homelessness. A resource coordinator then hooks defendants up with social service or treatment programs. The court moves fast, and the community service sentence usually begins immediately, cutting down on the "no show" problem some community-based sentencing programs suffer.

Neighbors are happy with the results: New York is starting a second community court in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn.

A number of jurisdictions report big gains from community sentencing and other alternatives to prison, such as house arrest. Kansas claims to have saved $30 million in 1993. Colorado, Michigan and Montana all allow community boards to decide who may be accepted in community-based programs. There is a recognition that, as a recent National Institute of Justice Report says, "Communities, as well as individuals, are victims of crime." Including the victims is what restorative justice is all about. Victims groups, in fact, are leaders in agitating for sentencing reform. Harriet Salerno, of Justice for Murder Victims, says community sentencing has to start early. "If we do community-based sentences for vandalism and petty stuff, it works," she says. "But usually those offenses are ignored. By the time they're committing violent crimes, they're too dangerous to handle in the community. They need more structure, which is why my group wants to expand the [detention] ranches and other places youth can learn responsibility." So community-based sentencing only works if the community is fully involved. Sentencing a youth to check in with a local service group once a day won't ensure safety or change behavior. The whole program of mediation, restitution, apology and community service is needed to put offenders on constructive paths, and that takes work. But justice since Moses' time has been about making the victim whole and helping the offender reintegrate into the community. The state cannot do that; its only interest is reinforcing its power, so communities have to fight to take control of justice.

A few questions for General Powell

Who won the Gulf War?

If the answer is the US, then how come Saddam Hussein is still in power?

Well then, if that's the case, when exactly did Hussein stop being the "modern-day Hitler," as we were told at the time?

How many people did your troops kill during the Gulf war?

Why did we have to kill that many?

Why do we still not know?

How many dead Iraqi draftees did your troops bulldoze into mass graves?

Wasn't the immolation of retreating Iraqi soldiers along the "Highway of Death" a bit excessive?

How many oil refineries were ignited by your own bombs?

How much radioactive material did you leave in the Iraqi desert?

Did we ever sell or give biological or chemical warfare agents to the Iraqi government and is this what the Gulf War Syndrome is all about?

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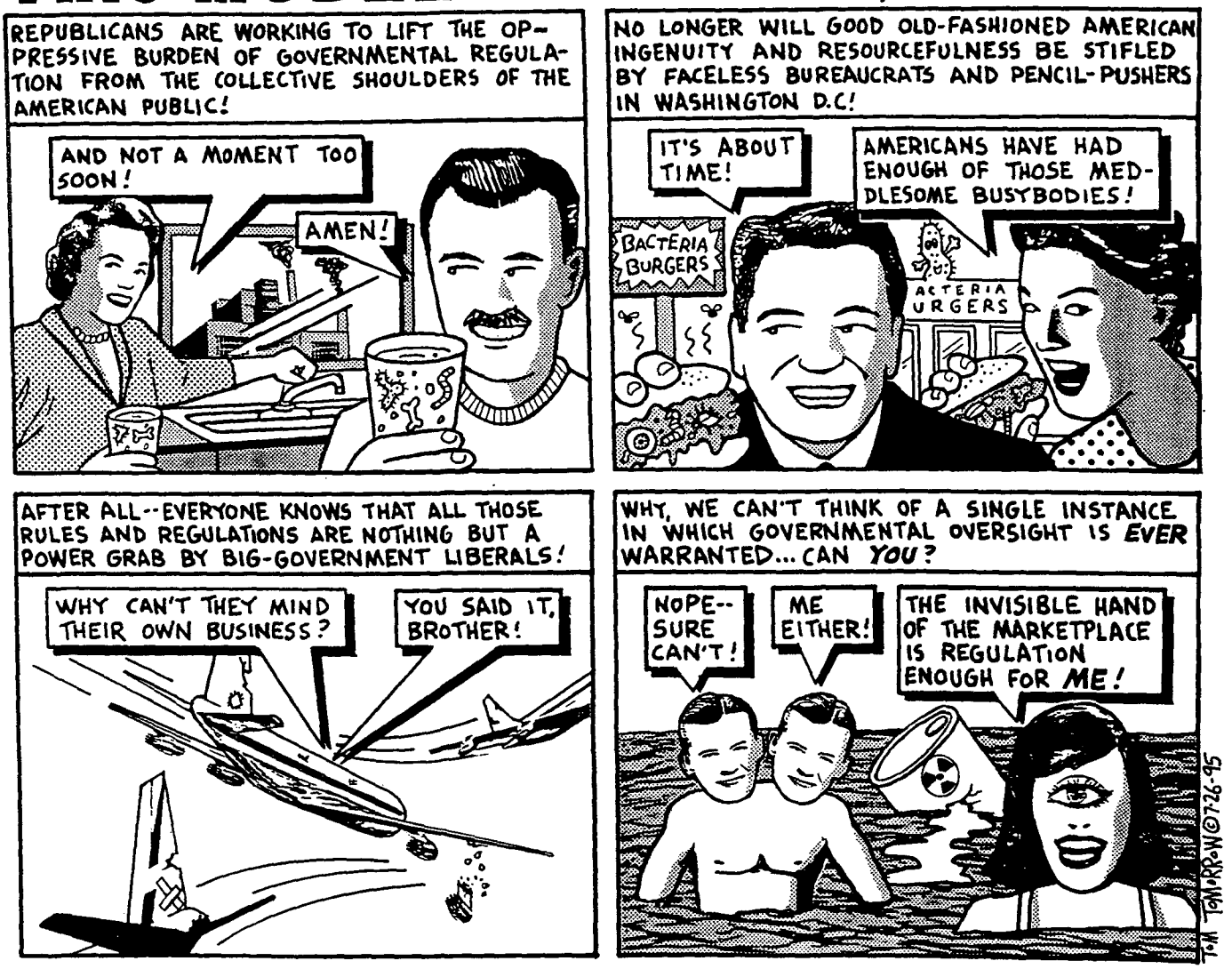
THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW


REPUBLICANS ARE WORKING TO LIFT THE OPPRESSIVE BURDEN OF GOVERNMENTAL REGULATION FROM THE COLLECTIVE SHOULDERS OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC!
AND NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON!
AMEN!
NO LONGER WILL GOOD OLD-FASHIONED AMERICAN INGENUITY AND RESOURCEFULNESS BE STIFLED BY FACELESS BUREAUCRATS AND PENCIL-PUSHERS IN WASHINGTON D.C!
IT'S ABOUT TIME!
AMERICANS HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF THOSE MEDDLESOME BUSYBODIES!
BACTERIA BURGERS
ACTERIA URGERS
AFTER ALL--EVERYONE KNOWS THAT ALL THOSE RULES AND REGULATIONS ARE NOTHING BUT A POWER GRAB BY BIG-GOVERNMENT LIBERALS!
WHY CAN'T THEY MIND THEIR OWN BUSINESS?
YOU SAID IT, BROTHER!
WHY, WE CAN'T THINK OF A SINGLE INSTANCE IN WHICH GOVERNMENTAL OVERSIGHT IS EVER WARRANTED... CAN YOU?
NOPE--SURE CAN'T!
ME EITHER!
THE INVISIBLE HAND OF THE MARKETPLACE IS REGULATION ENOUGH FOR ME!
TOM TOMORROW ©7-26-95

Or was it the untested experimental drug you made your soldiers take as a supposed protection against chemical warfare -- and which some consider a leading suspect in Gulf War Syndrome?

How many civilians did our troops kill in Panama?

How many were buried in mass graves?

Is the sort of censorship, disinformation and misinformation provided by the military during the Gulf war and Panamanian invasion what we could expect from a Powell presidency?

What differences are there between American-style democracy and civilian operations as carried out by the US military in places such as Panama, Kuwait and Somalia?

Which style of governance would your administration favor?

Describe the nature of your professional experience with each style of governance.

Why did you help to cover up allegations of a massacre of 400 Vietnamese at My Lai ?

While in Vietnam what steps, if any, did you take to stop war crimes such as the shooting of unarmed civilians from US helicopters?

Why did Iran-Contra special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh find your testimony in his investigation to be "at least misleading," although it "did not warrant prosecution?" Does this recommend you for the presidency?

List all general and primary elections in which you have voted over the past decade.

Name those domestic issue areas in which you know as much as either Bill Clinton or Robert Dole.

Name those in which you have had as much experience.

Describe your efforts to reduce the more than $30 billion in Pentagon "problem disbursements" -- i.e. money that was spent but the military can't figure out who spent or authorized it to be spent.

Does the fact that about half the front-line troops in the Gulf War were from ethnic minorities reflect your concern for civil rights?

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Why do you think it is that a higher percentage of American veterans than non-veterans are unemployed, homeless or imprisoned?

List those parts of the GOP "Contract with America" with which you agree and with which you disagree. Explain why, at this late date, we still have to ask.

Most people who think they're qualified to be president have some idea as to what they think about welfare, the budget, farm policy, and other such issues. When will you form an opinion on these matters?

What, other than cutting the capital gains tax as you have suggested, would you do to rebuild our central cities?

You have shown considerable interest in the Buffalo Soldiers. Discuss their role in the ethnic cleansing of native Americans by the US military.

You urged military men to resign if they also opposed Clinton's policy on gays in the military. Name one or more other issues in which you expressed public opposition to your commander-in-chief?

Are you at all concerned about the growing intrusion of the military into domestic American life, including law enforcement? Discuss.

What can you tell us that would reassure us that in voting for you we would not only put a military man in office but the military as well?

Would you tell us again, slowly, just why you think you're qualified to be president? -- *Sam Smith*

Why a flat tax isn't flat

Shown in the chart at right is the real tax rate for a "flat" tax of 15% with a $15,000 exemption -- one of the proposals currently floating around Washington. As the chart shows, the tax only starts to flatten out at about $75,000 annual income. At the lower income levels, the tax is far more "progressive" than even the current tax system. Thus the first thing to remember is that a flat tax is not flat; it simply shifts progressivity from upper income taxpayers to lower income ones.

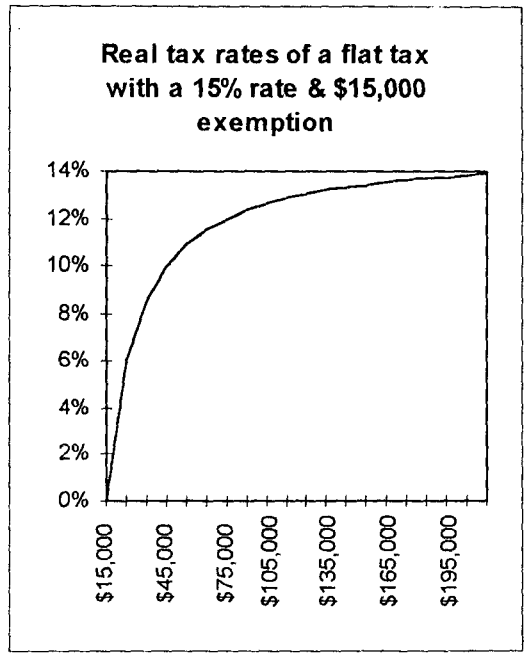
The second thing to note is that having a simplified tax does not require a flat tax. When Jerry Brown in the 1992 campaign suggested a flat tax, we pointed out that a better goal was a thin tax. Eve with several tax brackets one could easily enjoy the pleasures of progressivity and simplicity in tandem. No one has proposed such a tax because in truth most of those putting forth these ideas seek neither flatness nor simplicity but rather a lower tax for their friends and campaign contributors.

The third thing to note is that the many of the current plans would exempt interest and dividends, thus creating an absurd and indefensible inequity in the system.

A better tax system is highly desirable but at least three principles must be maintained

- Progressivity
- Common treatment of all income
- Maintenance of the most important deductions and credits such as those for home mortgages, low income tax credits, and charitable deductions.

The major GOP versions of new tax system contain none of these and thus must be regarded as one more form of tax fraud.



Deconstructing funk

It you want to know why politicians like Clinton get away with so much Orwellian bumfodder, you could do worse than to read *Washington Post* reporter David Broder's recent account of president's use of the word *funk* which began, "President Clinton declared victory in his war on 'funk' yesterday without firing a shot."

Let's follow Broder and Clinton's logic:

- Clinton had told reporters on Air Force One that his new mission was to "'get people out of their funk' about the dislocations and disturbances that are part of this period of rapid change."
- Within 72 hours, however, Clinton had decided that "funk was a poor choice of words . . . I feel very optimistic about the country. "
- Broder wrote that the "White House message mavens realized their boss was treading dangerously close to the word 'malaise' associated with President Jimmy Carter and the 1979 speech in which (without ever actually using the m-word) he blamed a sour public mood for the travails of his administration. The 'funk'

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flap needed fixing fast -- before it mushroomed into a 'malaise' mess."

• Asked about it later at a press luncheon, Clinton explained that "Last year, last November, plainly the country was in kind of an anxious mood, a negative mood, a frustrated mood about the government." But now the country is moving "into a more positive frame mind" thanks to good economic news and lower crime rates." He said it would be hard for the press or opponents to "convince people that I am advocating the politics of a national funk, because it's so inconsistent with my own outlook toward life." Besides, 'malaise' is a state of mind. A funk is something you can bounce right out of."

Now let's deconstruct all this:

• The inner monologue of Broder's article is that (1) what you say doesn't matter as long as you backtrack soon enough (2) the president and his handlers were really clever to engage in such disingenuous and timely verbal manipulation.

• Broder implies that *funk* is a milder word than *malaise*. In fact, a state of funk is far more serious than a state of malaise. As Broder himself noted, a funk is a "state of paralyzing fear." What he didn't say, however, is that malaise is only an "indefinite bodily weakness or discomfort." Thus Clinton used a far more apocalyptic word yet Broder managed to make it appear otherwise. Further, while admitting that Carter did not actually use the word *malaise*, Broder never tells his readers how the Washington press happened to convince the public otherwise.

• Broder also takes no note of the contradiction in the president saying that his new mission was to get people out of their funk, and then three days later saying that the funk had occurred a year ago and presumably was now gone.

• Finally, Broder allows the president, without challenge, to provide a totally misleading definition of the two words.

Imagine similar journalistic skill being applied to a more complicated issue such as Medicare or crime and you can see one reason Americans are in such a funk and/or malaise.

Jimmy Breslin thinks he knows where Clinton got the "funk" idea in the first place. Breslin happened to be at a hotel in Hawaii at the same time as TV huckster and Clinton advisor Tony Robbins, who was there for a promotion. Breslin watched Robbins urging a youth to climb a 45-foot pole. A crowd affiliated with Robbins yelled, "Get out of your funk, Dave. No blue funk, Dave. No blue funk, Dave." Breslin thinks Clinton picked up the word after Robbins visited him while the president was on vacation in Wyoming. Wrote Breslin: "I don't mind Tony Robbins selling his tapes to the suckers. . . It does both me, however, when one of the suckers is the country's president."

Details

• Anne Manning, a volunteer during a 1970s Gingrich campaign, describes some of her work with the candidate this way: "We had oral sex . . . He prefers that modus operandi because then he can say, 'I never slept with her.'"

• We're told some DC drug dealers are sending their families to live in the suburbs for a safer environment, better schools and so forth.. This emulation of the Mafia and rum-runners (such as the elder Kennedy) suggests that the drug wars may be in a late stage of development.

• Gore Vidal says in his memoirs that directing Charlton Heston must have been like "trying to animate a lumber yard."

• Stewart Brand, writing in techno trendy *Wired* , offers this postmodern paean to the present: "Time can be thought of in terms of everything happening-now-and-last-week-and-next-week (wide) or as a deep, flowing process in which centuries are minor events (long). The wide view sees events as most influenced by what is happening at the moment. The long view perceives events as most influenced by history. . . Wide time is on the increase these days and for good reason. Technology seems to be accelerating, and you have to keep up. Networks and markets, instead of staid old hierarchies, rule, and you have to keep up."

Weather Report

Just politics

There have been four instances in the 20th century when a third party presidential candidate has gotten more than 10% of the vote. In each case, the party against which the third party candidate was mainly rebelling rebounded in subsequent elections. Here are the cases:

• In 1912, Theodore Roosevelt (Progressive) took enough votes away from the GOP incumbent Taft to elect Woodrow Wilson president by 18 points. But just four years later, Charles Evan Hughes came within three points of Wilson and the next three presidential elections went Republican.

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Details

• A fiftyish Peace Corps employee has accused his female boss of sexual harassment. According to the allegations, when the employee protested that he was a married man, the woman boss replied, "That's your problem. We will have an affair yet. When I decide to have an affair, I have one, and I have it on my terms."

• Senator Packwood showed up at Washington's Irish Times bar one last time. A staffer said it was for "closure."

• A senior Army attorney has backed off charges made in a memo that congressional staffers has "engaged in espionage" for talking to international negotiators about the Pentagon position concerning laser weapons. After the news of the accusation broke, the attorney withdrew the memo explaining that it "has not been fully coordinated."

• Judge Kimba Wood has ruled that Jim Henson Productions did not violate the Hormel trademark by inventing a character named Spa'am. Afterwards a Hormel flack issued a statement saying that "We were surprised and disappointed in Judge Wood's decision . . . just when the company was planning a line of apparel and non-apparel items bearing the Spam image."

Litigation styles of the rich and famous: **The aforementioned Judge Wood's name has been raised in the marriage breakup of socially prominent Nancy and Frank Richardson. But she's not the only factor according to *Vanity Fair*. In separate affidavits, Nancy claims her husband is a spendthrift who "created through various residences a universe of hedonistic and exhibitionist excess," that he humiliated her sexually, suffers from a rage disorder and has been seeing a psychiatrist four times a week for the past three years. Meanwhile Frank claims his wife was determined to destroy him, had demeaned his sexual prowess, falsely spread rumors that he was gay, went through $1 million in clothing and jewelry in 1989 alone, has averaged $8000 a month on shoes over the past three years, called his office as many as 20 times a day, and was seeing six mental health professionals.**

• Yuppie coffee may be creeping in as a designer drug. One Starbucks employee has reported that he has several ex-crack users who come in several times a day for things like a "four shot" -- i.e. a quadruple expresso.

• In 1924, Robert M. LaFollette (Progressive) helped keep Democrat John Davis's total at 29% (down from Wilson's 49% eight years earlier). But two elections later, FDR started the five term tenure of the New Deal and Fair Deal Democrats.]

• In 1968, George Wallace (American Independent) helped keep the GOP from recovering from the Goldwater debacle and Nixon had to squeak into office over Humphrey. Four years later, however, Nixon won reelection by 61% of the vote.

In 1992, Ross Perot helped to drag down Bush's percentage to only 37% (from 53% in 1988. Two years later, Gingrich et al roared into legislative office.

The Center for Defense Information reminds us that the Gingrich Gang isn't the only one attacking the budget. The Democratic White House proposed a budget this year that -- without any GOP help -- would have reduced or in some cases eliminated funds for school-to-work programs, energy conservation, environmental protection, vocational and adult education, Head Start, UN peacekeeping, low-income home energy assistance, summer youth employment, legal assistance for the poor, as well as AIDS education and training centers. Meanwhile, Clinton's budget added $7 billion for military spending.

USA Today has come out editorially for some form of proportional representation. Said the paper: "The nasty fact is that our winner-take-all election system, adopted from 18th century England and unchanged, has the potential to leave up to 49.9% of the voters in any district feeling unrepresented -- whatever their race or ethnicity. Most other democracies have moved beyond us in making the systems more representative . . . It's time for some affirmative action for real democracy -- for all Americans."

How tough is it for third parties in this country? Consider this: there are 5440 state legislative seats. Third parties hold three.

It may help to understand Louis Farrakhan to remember that he spent some of his formative years in Boston -- a place, it is said, that believes in three things: sports, politics and revenge. While Boston did not invent ethnic and class hostility, it did turn them into an art form. So confident was Mayor James Michael Curley of the reaction of Irish voters in this regard that he hired Harvard students to go into South Boston and campaign for his opponent. It was a raw, tough, hyperbolic politics that never heard of the word *inappropriate* but which used a lot of words that would be considered so today.

In such a politics you learned not to rely on textual analysis but to watch what people actually did. By such a standard, Farrakhan's decision to live among the very non-nationalist folk of Chicago's Hyde Park may be at least as revealing as his very nationalist rhetoric. Similarly, an action rather than text-based evaluation would place the Nation of Islam well behind the 104th Congress in any fair ranking of efficacious hate groups.

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In fact, many religions could vie for position on the list. It is -- or has been until recently -- the typical view of followers of many faiths that those who did not share their convictions were going to hell. It is hard to conceive of a more prejudicial view of a fellow human being.

For example, on the day of the Million Man March, a black Christian minister on C-SPAN informed one of the participants that following Farrakhan would lead one to hell. No one suggested that the minister was a member of a hate group. And it was not all that long ago that one of our most sainted leaders, FDR, told a Catholic government economist and a Jewish Secretary of the Treasury that Catholics and Jews were in this country by sufferance and that they had better follow his lead on everything.

We keep trying to pretend that ethnic antipathies represent some deviation from the American norm. Because of this illusion, we waste a lot of time being shocked by what people say -- complaining about the right way to talk together instead of accepting the antipathy as real and then talking about how we can live together anyway. If we reversed our priorities, and worried about life before language, the language would tend to take care of itself.

Loose change

Here's a list of agricultural products where only four firms control at least 80% of the market: corn syrup, ready-to-eat cereals, beer, meat slaughtering, beer, soft-drinks, ready-to-drink tea and farm machinery. Just four companies (including Tysons Food), reports Pacific News Service, control over half of all meat and seafood sales. It is estimated that that ten cents of every dollars American spend on food goes to Philip Morris and six cents to ConAgra.

Privatization is having a few growing pains. The Esmor Correctional Services Corporation, one of the biggest players in the private prison business (with halfway houses, boot camps and detention centers), lost an immigration contract, according to the *New York Times*, after officials issued a report "detailing an atmosphere of abuse and penny-pinching in a jail for illegal immigrants and asylum seekers."

One of the best kept secrets in Washington is that reducing the deficit will not reduce the debt and that reducing the debt may not be that important anyway. As Susan Dentzer pointed out in the a *Newsweek* column, the debt (now nearing $5 billion) is less than one year's national income. Dentzer also noted that our debt, as a percentage of gross domestic product, is lower than Canada's or Italy's. In truth, obsession with the deficit coincides with the rise to power of those who want to do away with social welfare programs.

The mediacracy

The media surrender to the right continues apace, with ABC dumping Jim Hightower and Time-Warner kicking out its rap record label. What's more, James Ledbetter in the *Village Voice* reports that *Nation* regulars Alexander Cockburn, Christopher Hitchens and Katha Pollitt have been given "proposed guidelines" by their bosses. Among instructions for Cockburn was the note that "we are unenthusiastic about devoting any serious space . . . to bashing our allies on the liberal left." Hitchens told Ledbetter that he had thrown his letter away as he proposed to "ignore it in theory and practice." He did say he was hurt not to have been told to lay off Clinton since "I think I've been at least as rude and as militant as Alex has."

Meanwhile, *Nation* editor Katrina vanden Heuvel was busy remaking her mag's image on the *Archer Daniel Midlands Hour*, where she told McNeil and Lehrer that "I don't think of *The Nation* as a left publication. I think of it as an independent publication that, because the center has so shifted in this country, is on the liberal side of the spectrum." Yes, she actually said that.

Writing of the search for the Unabomber, the *New York Times'* Kenneth Noble produced this small gem of journalistic stereotyping: "For decades this socially progressive Northern California city [Berkeley], dominated by its famous university, has been a refuge for political rascals and social iconoclasts trying to elude the and reinvent themselves."

In his memoir, Pierre Salinger writes that he had the Secret Service hire a retired pickpocket to recover silverware from out-of-town reporters invited to Kennedy luncheons .

Jessica Mathews' *Washington Post* op ed piece on new and more realistic measures of economic growth was a classic example of gatekeeper journalism -- the assumption that the job of the press is not to tell readers about new ideas but to inform them when it is safe to hold them. Thus, soon after *Atlantic's* cover story on the subject, Mathews (who is a Council of Foreign Relations senior sinicurist), announced that the time for rethinking GDP had come. While one could have little quarrel with her view, Mathews' manner of expressing it was particularly graceless, albeit well within Beltway turf-fighter norms. She even tried to take credit for the idea by noting that she was vice president of the World Resources Institute when it issued a report on the subject by Robert Repetto in 1989. From this thin reed, she moved on to say that "other voices have joined the chorus," which is Washington lingo for "Oh, I knew that all along." When she finally gets around to citing the *Atlantic* article (which has attracted considerable attention) she doesn't even bother to mention the names

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of the authors, Clifford Cobb, Ted Halstead and Jonathan Rowe. We happened to notice this because Rowe has been a *Review* contributor from time to time although, despite Mathews' model of Beltway gamesmanship, we take no credit for anything he says.

Feedback

Martha Koester writes: Your article *America's Extremist Center* reminded me of a story that Claude Steiner told more than 20 years ago. (He was one of the founders of the radical therapy movement, whose premise was that "mental" problems should be treated with attention to the material and political circumstances of the patient.)

His definition of paranoia was that it was a mental state which is caused by being lied to. He gave the example of a woman who had told him in some detail about the elaborate plots her husband had to kill her. Her husband was disturbed about these fantasies and wanted Dr. Steiner to make them go away. Upon digging into the case, Steiner found out that the man had not been getting along with his wife, and whenever she asked him what was wrong, he said that everything was fine, though he had been making planes to institutionalize her.

The woman knew only that something was wrong. Since her husband would not give her the real story, she made up some consistent stories which explained her perceptions. Stein says that this is the source of all paranoid fantasies, and that all of them have a grain of truth however implausible the elaborations,.

Our brains are built so they must have sensory input in order to operate. If you get into a sensory deprivation tank, your brain will obligingly provide its own, commonly called hallucinations. Similarly, it is absolutely essential for us to have a consistent mental model of How Things Really Are. If people with power who control information flows lie or withhold information, everybody else is gong to be making p stories in which things make sense. If the powerful think that these stories are excessively bizarre, they ought to quit complaining and just start coughing up the missing information.

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